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ume of national history than the colonization and boundaries of Texas. This may be hypercriticism, for the admirable chapters upon Texas give so much important information not easily attainable elsewhere that one is glad to have them perhaps even at the expense of the other topics. There is, also, a lack of proportion in the treatment of the Mexican War. No attempt is made to describe in any detail the campaigns of Taylor and Scott. The events leading to hostilities, notably that of Slidell's mission in 1846, are set forth minutely and withal interestingly. Professor Garrison's familiarity with the Texan and Mexican archives is apparent in the fullness of his treatment of the Texas question. In his account of Polk's administration the invaluable diary of that President has been used to great advantage. References to it are frequent, and by it the causes of the Mexican War are shown in a new light. Polk determined to accomplish certain definite things, of which national extension to the Pacific was the most important. The author's use of Polk's diary shows how the programme was stubbornly and almost relentlessly carried out. The merit of this volume is the thoughtful and judicial treatment of a period of complicated political conditions and of problems new to the national life. If any fault is to be found with the book, it is in its lack of proportion. This, however, appears to be due rather to the plan of the work than to the author's execution of it.

JESSE S. REEVES.

The American Nation: a History. Edited by ALBERT BUSHNELL HART. Volume 18. *Parties and Slavery, 1850-1859.* By THEODORE CLARKE SMITH, Ph.D., Professor of American History in Williams College. (New York and London: Harper and Brothers. 1906. Pp. xvi, 341.)

THE title of the book, *Parties and Slavery*, calls attention to the fact that during the decade preceding the Civil War party readjustment on account of the slavery question filled a prominent place. The volume is by no means limited, however, to the topics suggested by the title. Besides dealing with the various phases of party relations and the questions directly involved, the author gives chapters on political leaders, diplomacy, railroad-building, the panic of 1857, "Social Ferment in the North", and finally a critical essay on authorities. The text is illuminated by several maps. The book does not profess to be a complete history of the decade which it covers, since other volumes in the series deal with closely related subjects. There are only occasional references to the work of the abolitionists, for example, that topic being more fully treated in volume 16 of the series.

There is evidence of a large amount of thorough and conscientious work on the part of the author. Many illuminating passages have been culled from newspapers and other contemporary publications, and there is throughout a discriminating selection of materials. There is a re-

markable freedom from any appearance of prejudice or bias in favor of any particular theory or opinion. The two sides of the great controversy are set forth with justice and an even hand.

In all history opinions, sentiments, and beliefs hold a leading place. The historian who deals with political parties deals pre-eminently with that part of public opinion which is continually under controversy. Political parties are the organs for the formulation of conflicting opinions, and their consideration is therefore fraught with peculiar difficulties. The subject-matter itself forestalls agreement. The historian, however thorough and impartial, is certain to advance opinions which others will not accept. To criticize in such a case is often simply to express a contrary opinion.

Comparing chapters II. and III. (in which the notion of the finality of the compromises of 1850 is discussed) with other parts of the book, one gets the impression that the idea of finality is over-emphasized. The author indeed supports his view by apt quotations from newspapers, from the speeches of statesmen, from the utterances of conventions and the results of elections; yet in these chapters no mention is made of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its influence upon the general controversy. In an entirely different connection, on page 281, that work is mentioned, and we are told that "it achieved an unparalleled success from the start, edition after edition being absorbed by a public gone wild over the humor and the tragedy of the work." This was the situation at the time when the doctrine of the finality of the compromises was being assiduously preached, and a public gone mad over *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was not in a state of mind to accept the Fugitive-Slave Law as a final settlement of the national dispute.

Our author is eminently fair in his treatment of the South, though the parts of the book dealing with that section exhibit less complete information than do other portions. The union sentiment in the South is recognized, but not so fully as it deserves to be, while the anti-slavery sentiment which existed in the slave states is almost wholly ignored. Helper's *Impending Crisis* is disposed of in a few lines which describe the book as "an anomaly", and the statement is made that it entirely failed to turn the non-slaveholding whites against the slaveholders. Why did it fail? The book threw the slaveholding leaders into a frenzy. John Sherman, when candidate for the speakership of the House of Representatives, was defeated because he had inadvertently lent his name to encourage its circulation. A Southern congressman declared that such a man was not only not fit for Speaker, he was not fit to live. Surely Southern slaveholders believed that *The Impending Crisis* would turn non-slaveholding whites against them if they should be allowed to read it.

These slight criticisms are intended rather to call attention to the difficulty which any author must encounter who writes on controversial politics than to characterize the work as a whole. The book is worthy of high commendation.